**OXFORD DIOCESAN GUILD OF CHURCH BELLRINGERS BICESTER BRANCH**

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT CAVERSFIELD ON SATURDAY 20th FEBRUARY 2016**

**(1) OPENING REMARKS** Mrs Teresa Carter (Vice President) took the chair. She thanked Mrs Penny Wood for taking the service, Mr Anthony Cole for making the arrangements and playing the organ. She welcomed 13 members of the Branch to the meeting.

**(2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Stuart Gibson, Colin Lee, Sue McCready, Hilarie Rogers, Sally Wale, John Harris

**(3) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING The** minutes of 21 February 2015 which had been made available on the Branch website were accepted on the proposal of Michael MacArthur, seconded by Anthony Cole, and signed.

**(4) MATTERS ARISING** None

**(5) CORRESPONDENCE** An update from Nigel Lambert, Churchwarden of Oddington, was provided -

at the AGM 2013 that the Branch were in favour of providing a grant of 10% toward the cost, with a cap of £1,000. The current position is that the Registrar is awaiting a response from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) to Whitechapel’s specification. St Andrew’s, Oddington is still £5,000 short of the quote to date.

 **(6) OFFICERS’ REPORTS**

 *Secretary (Kathryn Grant)*

We held our 2015 AGM in Launton on 21 February and welcomed three new members to the Branch (plus one during the year) but overall our membership is down. However we had a very encouraging summer/ autumn at Islip and Kirtlington with twenty potential new recruits, many of whom are making excellent progress thanks to enthusiastic and expert help from those in our own Branch and also our Oxford City Branch friends. Our branch outing was held on 18 April when 14 ringers started the day at Haynes in Bedfordshire in homage to our Branch President, Willie Haynes (who had recently been in the news having celebrated being Tower Captain and Steeple Keeper of Charlton on Otmoor for 50 years)! Anthony Cole, who had arranged the outing, also organised a second Ringing Up and Down course at Bicester in July as well as the monthly branch practices which have been attended with varying numbers. Three teams entered the branch striking competition in September, held at Islip. Congratulations go to Caversfield who were the winning team – and especially so since they are a young band. On a sadder note Bill Knapton, a Bicester and Caversfield ringer for many years, died in May at the age of 92. A quarter peal of Plain Bob Doubles was rung in Bicester in his memory.

On the proposal of Anthony Cole, seconded by Jeremy Adams, the report was adopted. All in favour.

*Treasurer (Sally Wale)*

The Treasurer’s report was read in her absence by Teresa Carter.

The Current Account on 31st December stood at £1,286.11; subscriptions were £512.00 and wedding donations were £170. The Deposit Account stands at £7,725.01 with the CBF Church of England Funds. Interest accrued this year was £38.70, bringing a total at the end of the year to £7,763.71.

Donations of £100.00 were sent to ODG Bell Fund and to the Bell Restoration Fund from the Branch.

Ringers have steadily dropped since 2010, when we had 81 in the branch and in the last year only 64, although some towers have up-and-coming ringers. Tower Captains have been reminded about subscriptions and it is hoped that this year we will have a quick response, subscriptions are coming in well.

The accounts have been audited this year by Chris Rippon the Treasurer of Islip Village Hall Committee and I have written to him thanking him on behalf of this branch.

On the proposal of Willie Haynes, seconded by Michael MacArthur, the report was adopted.

*Report from Guild Representative (Anne Martin)*

The Guild Representative reminded everyone of the website for the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers at <http://odg.org.uk/> The website includes information on the work of the various committees, library, diary dates, downloads e.g. for methods and tower maintenance tasks, striking competitions and more. The ODG is a territorial society representing bell ringers in the English counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, which together comprise the Diocese of Oxford. It has in excess of 2,000 members, the highest total of any Society which is affiliated to the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and its activities are organised by several sub-committees.

* The Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund has produced a flyer for information explaining how the Bell fund operates, and in particular, invites donations. Oxford Diocesan Bell Fund Sponsored Ringing Week will be held from 20-29 (Leap Year) February. The Shield will be presented to the Branch raising the greatest amount per head of membership. It's a great opportunity for ringers of all abilities to have some fun and do a bit of extra ringing to generate sponsorship for the Bell Fund. It does not have to be quarter peals and peals, all sorts of ringing at all levels of ability qualify. And where appropriate Gift Aid can be applied to the sponsorship money making sponsorship even more valuable! The Trustees appreciate the efforts if everyone who organises and rings in this event which is a key fund-raising activity for the Bell Fund. Sponsorship forms are available to down load by following this link or can be supplied by the Bell Fund Secretary.*Odd Bob* is now published in May and November.
* The Education Committee runs courses catering for a wide range of needs - basic method ringing (Radley and Steeple Aston); more advanced method ringing (September (Michaelmas) and ten bell ringing in early December. The next Radley course is on 9 April. Although the poster advises that application must be made by 31 Jan, it may still be worth applying. (They considered cancelling the previous courses due to lack of numbers). Ringing criteria has been more closely defined this year as stays were broken at previous courses.
* The interest in an annual Training Meeting for Branch training officers (or their equivalent), with discussion and practical session, normally held in February, has waned this year and it is not being held.
* A support network to enable ringing teachers in the Guild to share their experience and support each other. (More details on the website)
* A book stall, containing popular ringing books that members can see and buy. The book stall is at all major Guild events.
* Guild publications for sale: a series of 13 leaflets on a wide range of topics. (Some of which can be downloaded from the website.)
* An award scheme for young ringers, normally run every few years. The most recent was run in 2015/2016.
* The education committee are keen to hear of other training needs. Contact the Chairman or Secretary of the Education Committee.
* Towers and Belfries Committee are concerned that a number of towers are allowing their Tower Maintenance Award to lapse. Last year 2 Rope Splicing courses were held in the Vale of the White Horse, and a Bell Maintenance Course at Newbury.
* Subscriptions for 2016. The subscription will remain at £8 and peal fees will remain at 50p per participant

A general discussion on the topic to be raised in advance of the Spring General Committee meeting followed – the topic was Good striking and bell handling. As a branch, what do you do to identify and tackle handling issues among your members? What branch activities if any do you have to improve striking?

# General points

Good handling should be taught from the beginning so that bad habits do not develop.

Bad habits are very hard to correct

Need to be able to listen for good striking.

Some people are happy as they are and might be offended if someone suggested that they needed to improve. They might even stop them ringing.

*What we do already*

Striking competition

Handling problems are picked up by others, sometimes

Branch practices – encourage people to ring at other towers to get used to handling other bells.

Various exercises eg ringing while facing the wall, to get people to listen

3 bell methods to make it easier to count places and hear your own bell.

Keep slogging on.

*What we will do in future*

Video

Ringing teachers – may be passing on (or not correcting) bad habits – need more training for teachers.

Could the teachers be assessed / ART scheme more widely publicised.

On the proposal of Kathryn Grant, seconded by Anthony Cole, the report was adopted.

*Branch Ringing Masters (A.C.Cole & J Adams)*

We have had a pretty busy year with a branch practice each month and (apart from August) a special practice each month as well. In the main attendance has been good though we haven't always managed the nominated methods at the special practices. I suppose a highlight for me was the Grandsire Triples and Little Bob Minor at Bicester in May as it pushed our boundaries a little (something I am sure you know I am keen on as I feel it helps makes ringing more interesting). As well as the regular practices we had our branch outing to Bedfordshire in April where we had 14 ringers (11 from the branch), plus a couple of hangers on and two dogs. It turned out to be a lovely day and the tea room at the end (whilst a surprise to the organiser) was a lovely way to finish. A week later members of the branch (mostly a Caversfield outing, but with members from Launton as well) visited the Leigh End mini-ring in Wheatley – a fun evening and perhaps one the branch might like to visit again? In July Bicester hosted a Ringing Up & Down course attended by 4 pupils and a number of helpers and this proved to be a useful afternoon for those attending so thanks to everyone who came and helped. Islip (and in particular Kathryn) hosted the striking competition and BBQ in September. We had 3 teams all with relatively recent recruits among them which made for a very close competition, with Caversfield coming out victorious – thanks to Louise and Alison from the W&W branch for judging, and Kathryn for opening her home once again. We sadly lost one of our eldest and long serving ringers (Bill Knapton) in May, and a quarter peal was rung in tribute:

Oxon St Edburg Monday 25 May 2015 in 42 mins (15-0-7)

1 Janet Smith 2 Sarah Cole 3 Simon White 4 Jeremy Adams 5 Anthony Cole(C) 6 Steve Walker

Rung to celebrate the life Bill Knapton, ringer at Bicester for many years, who died recently aged 92.

This year we are hoping to have a couple of outings (Herefordshire in April, and a “mini-tour” of the 3 and 4 bells of the Bicester branch in the autumn). The ringing course in July this year will be on rope splicing, most likely in Bicester tower. Finally a challenge! At the January branch practice we rang plain courses of Stedman Doubles and one member reminisced we used to ring Stedman Triples years ago so the challenge for the branch is to ring a plain course of Stedman Triples before the year is out!

On the proposal of Jeremy Adams, seconded by Teresa Carter, the report was adopted.

*Website Manager (Anthony Cole)*

The branch website, as in recent years, has had articles on each of the practices we have had during the year and it is good to see it is read by some, and has helped us to attract a small number of new recruits over the last year. As ever, if you visit another tower whilst on holiday etc please do send me details as it adds life and interest to the website.

Whilst technically not website related, the web server is also now providing a means of sending emails from branch officers to all members for whom we have an email address. This is a relatively new feature which I've added, but does mean that messages can be sent out when Kathryn is not available (or her computer is being mended!). We have 32 members on the list at present, but if anyone is not receiving branch messages by email and would like to then please let me have your email address.

On the proposal of Anne Martin, seconded by Kathryn Grant, the report was adopted.

 **(7) ELECTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

The following new members were elected: Susan Carter (Islip), James Carter (Islip), Rebecca Hore (Woodeaton) Proposed: Teresa Carter S: Kathryn Grant; Bill Muncey (Stratton Audley), Amy Stalder (Stratton Audley), Clare Stalder (Stratton Audley) Proposed: Jeremy Adams S: Anthony Cole, Steve Vickars (Kirtlington), Judith Vickars (Kirtlington) Proposed: Willie Haynes S: Anthony Cole. The election of Rachel Holt (Islip) on Tuesday 20 October 2015 was noted.

**(8) ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Jeremy Adams suggested that all the officers were elected en bloc P: Jeremy Adams S: Anthony Cole President: Willie Haynes Vice Presidents: John Harris and Teresa Carter Secretary: Kathryn Grant Treasurer: Sally Wale Guild Representative: Anne Martin Branch Ringing Master: Anthony Cole Deputy Branch Ringing Master: Jeremy Adams Website Manager: Anthony Cole

**(9) GUILD EVENTS**

 a. Spring General Committee Meeting on Saturday 12 March 2016 (Little Missenden) b. Radley course on 9 April 2016 – closing date for applicants 31 Jan. c. HM Queen Elizabeth’s 90th birthday 21 April d. St George’s Day, and 400th anniversary of the death of William Shakespeare, Saturday 23 April e Annual Ringing Day, with 20 towers open, on 2 May hosted by the Newbury Branch f. Guild AGM on 21 May hosted by the Vale of the White Horse Branch g. Guild Festival, Oxford, Saturday 9 July h. Michaelmas Training Day Saturday 24 September i. 6 bell striking competition 1 October hosted by EBSB) j. Steeple Aston course on 22 October in Steeple Aston k. Autumn General Committee Meeting (Chipping Norton Branch) and Guild 10 bell striking competition Saturday 26 November.

 **(10) DONATIONS TO BELL FUND AND RESTORATION FUND OF ODG**

On the proposal of Willie Haynes, seconded by Kathryn Grant £150 will be given to each fund. All in favour.

**(11) CHURCH COLLECTION**

The collection at the service would be given to Caversfield.

**(12) DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

AGM on Saturday 18 February 2017 morning (proposed for Kirtlington). As mentioned in 2015 it would be beneficial if each branch tower could be represented by at least one member at the AGM.